

59th GEF Council Meeting
December 7 – 11, 2020
Virtual Meeting

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE UPDATED VISION TO ENHANCE ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Background	2
Progress on the Implementation of the Updated Vision.....	3
Process of Selection of CSOs and IPLC for Council meetings and GEF Consultations with Civil Society.....	3
Civil Society Participation in Council preparatory meetings	4
Engagement of CSOs and IPLC in Consultations and at the 55 th GEF Council Meeting	5
Engagement of CSOs and IPLC in Consultations and at the 56 th GEF Council Meeting	6
Engagement of CSOs and IPLC in Consultations and at the 57 th GEF Council Meeting	7
Engagement of CSOs and IPLC at the virtual 58 th GEF Council Meeting	7
Preparation of the Consultations on Traditional Knowledge.....	8
Capacity Development, Consultation and Outreach to Civil Society	8
Participation in the Expanded Constituency Workshops and National Dialogues of the Country Support Program	8
Dissemination of Information and Communications	9
Next Steps: Knowledge and Learning.....	10
Annex I: Opportunities for Civil Society Engagement with the GEF.....	11
Annex II: Concept Note on Traditional Knowledge for the Consultations with Civil Society in December 2020.....	12

INTRODUCTION

1. In November 2017, at its 53rd meeting, the GEF Council approved an Updated Vision to Enhance Civil Society Engagement with the GEF (Updated Vision)¹. This Updated Vision was the result of a consultative process conducted by an Ad-Hoc Working Group of interested Council members, in response to the evaluation of the GEF Network of Civil Society Organizations (the CSO Network) conducted by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office in 2015-2016 (IEO)².
2. At the request of Council, the GEF Secretariat presented a progress report on the implementation of the Updated Vision as an information paper at the 55th GEF Council meeting in December 2018.
3. This paper presents an updated progress report of activities and steps led by the Secretariat to support the implementation of the Updated Vision during the period between December 2018 and November 2020. It covers the following actions:
 - (a) Organization and Participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) in the GEF Consultations with Civil Society on Gender and the Environment and in the 55th GEF Council meeting (December 2018).
 - (b) Organization and Participation of CSOs and IPLC in the GEF Consultations with Civil Society on Solutions to Plastic Pollution and in the 56th GEF Council meeting (June 2019).
 - (c) Organization and Participation of CSOs and IPLC in the GEF Consultations with Civil Society on Illegal Wildlife Trade and in the 57th GEF Council meeting (December 2019).
 - (d) Participation of CSOs and IPLC in the 58th virtual GEF Council meeting in June 2020.
 - (e) Organization of the GEF Consultations with CSOs and IPLC on Traditional Knowledge to be held in virtual form on December 4, 2020.
 - (f) Participation of civil society in the Expanded Constituency Workshops of the GEF's Country Support Programme.

¹ [GEF/C.53/10/Rev.01, Updated Vision to Enhance Civil Society Engagement with the GEF.](#)

² GEF Independent Evaluation Office: [Evaluation of the GEF Civil Society Organization Network](#), May 2016. The Updated Vision was developed to ensure full effectiveness in civil society engagement with the GEF, and to address some issues and gaps that had been identified. At the operational level, it focused in particular on specific elements of this engagement, including CSO engagement during GEF Council meetings.

4. In addition, this paper presents the plans to continue conducting GEF-led activities in support of the implementation of the Updated Vision, in the context of the global pandemic and during the remaining months of GEF-7.

BACKGROUND

5. The Updated Vision approved by the GEF Council in December of 2017 supports a stronger GEF engagement with civil society, particularly through GEF-led events such as the Council meetings and Consultations and the GEF Assembly. The Updated Vision also provides guidelines for engagement of civil society in the GEF's Country Support Program and other activities led by the Secretariat, including the development of GEF policies and strategies, where consultations with civil society and other stakeholders are conducted.

6. The Updated Vision complements other key elements of civil society engagement with the GEF, including in the formulation and implementation of GEF programs and projects, as required by inter-alia the Policies on [Stakeholder Engagement](#), [Gender Equality](#) and [Environmental and Social Safeguards](#), as well as related guidelines.

7. The Updated Vision lays out clear principles and procedures for the selection of civil society representatives to participate in the biannual GEF Council meetings and in the GEF Consultations with civil society and provides information on the purpose and structure of those Consultations.

8. In this regard, the Updated Vision entrusts the GEF secretariat with the responsibility of conducting the selection process of sponsored CSOs for Council consultations and Council meetings to ensure that representatives are sharing the voices of CSOs from the field, while maintaining robust engagement on policy issues. The document states that the selection will be done in a “transparent manner, based on clear criteria and in consultation with the CSO Network, Operational Focal Points (OFPs), and the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group.”³

9. In addition, the Updated Vision states that the Council will invite CSOs to present on specific topics – chosen by the Council, with input from CSOs and the GEF Secretariat – “intended to highlight the experiences of local CSOs during project implementation while also seeking to align with the Council Meeting Agenda”.

³ Updated Vision: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.53.10.Rev_.01_CS0_Vision_0.pdf

PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UPDATED VISION

10. In December 2018, the GEF Secretariat presented to the 55th GEF Council [a Progress Report on the Implementation of the Updated Vision](#)⁴. Building on that report, this document presents an updated progress report of activities and steps led by the Secretariat to support the implementation of the Updated Vision during the period between December 2018 and November 2020.

11. The report focuses on the selection process, the participation of civil society and indigenous peoples in three GEF Council meetings and three GEF Consultations, as well as the engagement of civil society in activities of the Country Support Program, in particular the Expanded Constituency Workshops.

12. Finally, this report presents an overview of the activities foreseen for the remainder of GEF-7 with emphasis on the planning of Consultations with civil society and a series of activities to enhance knowledge and learning for CSOs, in the context of the global pandemic.

Process of Selection of CSOs and IPLC for Council meetings and GEF Consultations with Civil Society

13. As reported in the December 2018 Progress Report, based on the general criteria provided by the Updated Vision, in consultation with the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), the GEF CSO Network (CSO Network), and the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), the GEF Secretariat proposed more detailed [selection criteria](#) to guide the call for applications of civil society and indigenous peoples representatives ahead of the GEF Council meetings and Consultations.

(a) Call for Applications

- Two months prior to the 55th, the 56th and the 57th GEF Council meetings respectively, the Secretariat circulated a *call for applications* to CSOs registered on a comprehensive list of more than 2,000 contacts that included members of the CSO Network, and CSOs and IPLCs that participated in previous GEF-led global, regional and national events, as well as references provided by Operational Focal Points, GEF Agencies, IPAG and the SGP. The call for applications was followed by subsequent reminders. The [selection criteria](#) were detailed in this call for applications. In addition, the call for applications was posted on the [GEF website](#) for public information.

(b) Review of Applications

⁴ GEF/C.55/Inf.04: Progress on the Implementation of the Updated Vision to Enhance Engagement with Civil Society.

- Within the established application deadlines that were set for potential participants to be sponsored, the GEF Secretariat received 317 applications for the 55th Council and Consultations, 181 applications for the 56th Council and Consultations and 149 applications for the 57th Council and Consultations.
- On each occasion, a team at the Secretariat carefully reviewed all the answers provided by applicants and based on the guidance set out in the Updated Vision and the approved criteria, the team preselected a list of potential CSO participants for the three GEF Council meetings and corresponding Consultations. These preliminary lists were sent to the CSO Network for information and comment, as per the Updated Vision.
- Comments received from the Network suggested some adjustments that were considered by the Secretariat and weighed against the criteria. These criteria included relevance regarding the topic selected for the Consultations, rotation, geographic balance, representation of IPLC, gender balance, among others. Thus, a new and final list was produced and circulated, and the selected participants were notified. The GEF Secretariat organized all the travel and related logistics to bring the participants from their home countries to Washington DC. The following is the number of sponsored and self-sponsored participants who attended each of the meetings:
 - 55th GEF Council and Consultations with civil society: 20 sponsored civil society participants and 15 self-sponsored CSOs.
 - 56th GEF Council and Consultations with civil society: 22 sponsored, 23 self-sponsored.
 - 57th GEF Council and GEF Consultations with civil society: 23 sponsored, 12 self-sponsored.

Civil Society Participation in Council preparatory meetings

14. In the days prior to the Consultations with Civil society and to each Council meeting, the GEF Secretariat organized teleconferences with members of the CSO Network, IPAG and other CSOs to discuss the upcoming events and respond any queries.

15. In addition, CSO and IPLC representatives conducted in-person preparatory meetings on the Sundays prior to the Consultations, where, the CSO Network Chair opened the meeting and the GEF Secretariat made presentations regarding CSO engagement with the GEF, the Council agenda and the mechanics for their participation. The CSO Network facilitated the preparation of statements to be delivered at the Council meetings engaging the participation of the CSOs that would attend these meetings.

Engagement of CSOs and IPLC in Consultations and at the 55th GEF Council Meeting

16. The GEF Council had selected the topic of *Connecting Environmental Impact and Gender Equality* at the 54th GEF Council Meeting to be discussed at the GEF Council Consultations with Civil Society Organizations on the day prior to the 55th GEF Council meeting. These consultations were designed by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with the CSO Network, IPAG, and the SGP. The Consultations took place on December 17th, 2018 and attracted an audience of approximately 70 participants, including 35 CSOs and IPLCs, a number of Council members, GEF Agencies and GEF Secretariat staff.

17. The Consultations started with a dialogue with the GEF's CEO, followed by two panels, organized by the CSO Network and supported by the GEF Secretariat. The first panel addressed the implementation of the updated vision to enhance civil society engagement with the GEF and the second panel focused on the evolving role of CSOs in GEF-7.

18. A panel discussion on the selected topic of *Connecting Environmental Impact and Gender Equality* followed, moderated by Ms. Anar Mamdani, Alternate GEF Council member, Canada, who emphasized the importance of actions to promote gender equality in GEF-7.

19. The panel of CSO and IPLC representatives presented on the perspectives that women bring to projects and the importance of giving women a voice; the role of women entrepreneurs; the relationship between environmental, gender and health issues; and, the need to address women's access to land, land rights and control of natural resources.

20. Representatives from IPLC presented on how indigenous women can bring the spiritual dimension to addressing environmental degradation and the role of women in passing knowledge from one generation to the next. Other topics included the role of women in environmental justice and climate change and examples from projects were given on the participation of women in combatting land degradation, chemicals and waste and energy efficiency through the clean cookstoves.

21. At the conclusion, panelists made some recommendations to the GEF, governments and donors, regarding the need to encourage young women to engage in environmental issues; consider women as partners or allies, not victims; and the importance of translating traditional knowledge into mainstream science.

22. The Consultations ended with the launch of the report 'Women as Environmental Stewards: The Experience of the Small Grants Programme'.

23. During the next three days at the 55th GEF Council meeting, the CSO Network and other civil society representatives participated in all the sessions and provided statements related to each agenda item. As per the Updated Vision, CSOs were given the floor upon request. This allowed them to participate with their comments and inputs in a timely fashion and to contribute to the discussions with Council members.

Engagement of CSOs and IPLC in Consultations and at the 56th GEF Council Meeting

24. The GEF Consultations with civil society took place on June 10, 2019 on the day prior to the start of the 56th Council meeting. In the morning, the Consultations proceeded with the dialogue with the GEF's CEO, hosted by the CSO Network and supported by the GEF Secretariat. This dialogue was followed by a panel, organized by the CSO Network, on civil society's contributions to higher results and impact and a proposed *new paradigm* of engagement with CSOs. The morning closed with a brainstorming session organized by the CSO Network on future topics for the Consultations with civil society.

25. The afternoon continued with the session on the selected topic of *Plastic Pollution: How Do We Tame This Menace? Solutions from civil society organizations, government and the private sector*.

26. These consultations started with a video of GEF's work in this area, followed by a panel which introduced the topic, moderated by Ms. Lauren Gisnås, Council member representing Norway and followed by 3 rotating tables on *product material and design, consumer use and behavior, and waste collection and recycling systems*. Participants had the opportunity to discuss the critical role of CSOs in addressing plastic pollution in collaboration with governments and businesses, with an emphasis on addressing the entire lifecycle of plastics.

27. These consultations were attended by over 120 participants (CSOs, Council members, private sector, GEF Agencies, STAP, Convention Secretariats and GEF Secretariat staff) in a lively discussion around the latest thinking on plastic solutions, particularly the need to stem the flow of mass production and consumption inherent in a take-make-waste, linear economy by reducing demand and shifting to reusable and recyclable plastic products.

28. Participants also discussed the real solutions and best practices that governments, businesses and CSOs can undertake toward a circular economy of closed loop production and consumption. Civil society organizations provided valuable examples of their experience and solutions to the issues of plastic pollution at each stage of the product cycle.

29. The Consultations closed with a panel on finance, moderated by Ms. Anar Mamdani, Alternate GEF Council member, Canada, where panelists discussed private investment opportunities to address plastic pollution, the Blue Natural Capital Facility/IUCN - accelerator program and a multilateral development bank's perspective on investing in plastic pollution reduction

30. In the course of the following three days, civil society representatives participated in the 56th GEF Council meeting and provided comments and statements concerning the different agenda items.

Engagement of CSOs and IPLC in Consultations and at the 57th GEF Council Meeting

31. The GEF Consultations with Civil Society took place on December 16, 2019 and were organized by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with the GEF CSO Network, the GEF Small Grants Programme, the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) and the World Bank, the leading agency of the GEF-financed Global Wildlife Program (GWP).
32. The Consultations opened with a dialogue with the CEO in the morning, and it included two panels organized by the CSO Network and supported by the GEF Secretariat on the proposed GEF Private Sector Strategy and the GEF CSO Network and Sustainability.
33. The afternoon continued with the *Consultations on Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade: A Civil Society Perspective*, which had been previously selected by Council. The Consultations opened with introductory video, courtesy of Greg Carr - Gorongosa National Park – Mozambique followed by two Keynote speakers: Steven Broad - Executive Director, TRAFFIC and Kaddu Sebunya - CEO, African Wildlife Foundation.
34. The keynote addresses were followed by a roundtable on the role of communities in the management of conservation areas & in law enforcement and a roundtable on the benefits of a wildlife economy for the local communities
35. CSO participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, discussed the type of protected areas where communities are directly responsible for the management of wildlife as well as the co-management modalities where communities can effectively engage in the day to day operation of the protected areas. They discussed the role of communities in law enforcement and in providing information to the park and government authorities responsible for law enforcement from the rangers to the judiciary.
36. Panelists discussed how communities can receive direct and indirect benefits from wildlife, either from community-based tourism facilities or working in various roles in high-end tourism operations and from extractive Tourism (trophy hunting and bush meat). The moderator engaged the panelists and other participants in a discussion about the challenges and opportunities and the barriers for the communities to receive benefits from a wildlife economy.

Engagement of CSOs and IPLC at the virtual 58th GEF Council Meeting

37. The 58th GEF Council meeting was held virtually due to the COVID19 pandemic on June 2-3, 2020 and the GEF Consultations with CSOs on the selected topic of Traditional Knowledge did not proceed. These consultations have been postponed to December in association with the 59th Council meeting.
38. Given the special circumstances posed by a virtual Council meeting and on an exceptional basis, the GEF Secretariat requested the CSO Network to select two representatives

amongst its members to represent the voices of civil society at the 58th Council meeting and in turn it asked the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) to appoint one representative to bring the voices of IPLC.

39. These representatives were asked to consult in advance with their constituencies and prepare their interventions and feedback in a coordinated fashion to each Council agenda item. In order to support them, the GEF Secretariat organized two preparatory meetings with these representatives and other CSO Network members, where the GEF Secretariat presented the various Council papers and responded to any doubts and questions that they had, in advance of their participation in the Council meeting. The three representatives participated in the 58th Council meeting alongside the Council members and provided comments to the different agenda items.

Preparation of the Consultations on Traditional Knowledge

40. The GEF Consultations with CSOs and IPLC on the *Application of Traditional Knowledge by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, Stewards of the Global Environment* will be held in virtual form on December 4th in connection with the 59th GEF Council.

41. An on-line event may pose some challenges in terms of time-zone differences and format, but it may also present an opportunity for engaging a larger number of representatives of civil society and indigenous peoples and local communities around the world and reaching out to a larger audience of other stakeholders.

42. This consultation is being organized by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), the GEF Small Grants Programme and the GEF CSO Network. The consultation aims at bringing the voices of indigenous peoples and local communities in a dialogue with civil society, GEF Council members, GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat and other stakeholders to discuss the value of traditional knowledge in supporting the conservation of biodiversity, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and combating other global and local threats, including responses to the COVID 19 pandemic. A concept note is included in Annex 2 of this paper.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, CONSULTATION AND OUTREACH TO CIVIL SOCIETY

Participation in the Expanded Constituency Workshops and National Dialogues of the Country Support Program

43. In 2019, under the activities of the Country Support Program (CSP), the GEF Secretariat conducted 11 Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs), which assembled approximately 200 civil society representatives in all regions (2 representatives per country) who were fully sponsored to participate, together with Operational Focal Points, Convention Focal Points, Agencies and GEF Secretariat staff in these workshops.

44. The ECWs comprised 2 sessions dedicated to the topic of stakeholder engagement and gender equality and civil society participation in the GEF. Participants interacted in a dialogue with their country peers and government officials where they identified challenges and opportunities for civil society participation. Representatives from the CSO Network presented on their activities and engagement opportunities for CSOs. Civil Society participants were also given the opportunity to attend the meetings with the government and GEF Secretariat regarding the GEF portfolio in the countries.

45. Civil society organizations were also invited to participate in the National Dialogues that took place during 2019 and 2020. These dialogues are requested by the OFPs and are particularly important in terms of discussing programming priorities as well as to disseminate and validate national environmental policies, and to discuss project implementation.

46. In 2020, a new virtual Stakeholder Empowerment Series (SES) replaced ECWs in the CSP programming in response to the COVID19 pandemic; only one ECW was conducted in Kenya in February for the Eastern Africa constituency, where 36 CSO representatives were fully sponsored to participate and had the opportunity to engage during three full days with other colleagues and OFPs, Agencies and GEF Secretariat staff. The agenda included sessions related to civil society and stakeholder engagement and gender equality, the GEF Small Grants Programme as well as knowledge and learning activities.

Dissemination of Information and Communications

47. The GEF Secretariat continues to disseminate information related to civil society and Indigenous Peoples engagement, through a specialized landing page on the GEF's website (www.thegef.org/partners/csos). This page contains information on GEF activities with CSOs, the GEF SGP, and opportunities to engage with the GEF. It also provides a description of the GEF's Conflict Resolution services and a link to the specialized page. In addition, the Secretariat responds to all queries addressed to the GEF civil society email account (gefcivilsociety@thegef.org).

48. The Secretariat conducts monthly teleconferences with the Chair and Vice-Chair and other members of the Coordination Committee of the GEF CSO Network regarding coordination, engagement opportunities and consultations on specific topics.

49. The new GEF's CEO has conducted two meetings with the CSO Network's coordination committee and he expressed the Secretariat's commitment to work closely with civil society organizations to achieve the GEF's mission.

NEXT STEPS: KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

50. As a consequence of the pandemic and given the impossibility of holding in-person meetings, activities with CSOs will have to move to a virtual format. Hence, the Secretariat has planned a series of events that will engage CSOs and IPLC in virtual sessions encompassing different topics of interest to these stakeholders.

51. The series targeting CSOs cover topics of interest to the GEF Partnership as well as those of special interest as expressed in consultations and surveys with CSOs engaging with the GEF. The series will start with the *Art of Knowledge Exchange for Civil Society Organizations*, programmed for November 18, 2020, which builds upon the course and accompanying manual developed by the GEF, which, in turn, were modeled on those of the World Bank. This activity is organized in coordination with the new SES activities supported by the CSP.

52. The main objective of this online workshop and hands-on clinics is to improve CSOs capacity to learn, exchange knowledge and raise awareness, especially with respect to their experiences with GEF projects and with global environmental issues in general.

53. Towards the above objective, the proposed program on the Art of Knowledge Exchange will: i) provide a roadmap and tools for CSOs to help them share their knowledge, skills, expertise, and resources to meet their project goals, ii) increase awareness of common problems and solutions, and iii) help CSOs build connections and trust with their peers and GEF so that they can reach out to access the available knowledge and experience to address their problems.

54. In addition, CSOs will have the opportunity to participate together with OFPs and other stakeholders in a series of on-line events programmed such as the Gender and the Environment (conducted in October 2020) and the Training on the Program and Project Cycle Guidelines, among others.

ANNEX I: OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GEF

Country Level – Program and Project design and Execution	Global/Regional South-South Knowledge Exchange and Dialogue with other stakeholders	Global Level – Decision Making	Other Consultations	Knowledge and Learning
Consultations on GEF Program and Project design and FPIC (Indigenous Peoples) – As per Policies and Guidelines	CSP Expanded Constituency Workshops: Dedicated sessions on stakeholder and civil society engagement.	Council meetings: CSOs represented to bring the voices from the field to provide inputs at each agenda item	Policy and Strategy Formulation: CSOs are consulted when a policy, guideline or strategy is being formulated	Gender and the Environment
Participation in projects as executors/co-executors/ leveraging co-financing	CSP Stakeholder Empowerment Series: Art of Knowledge Exchange for CSOs	GEF Consultations with CSOs: prior to Council meetings: Selected Topic.	Participation in working groups: GGP, Public Involvement, KM Advisory Group	An update on the Operational Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle
GEF Small Grants Programme: Dedicated funding window for Civil Society and Communities	GEF Small Grants Programme: South- South Cooperation	Civil Society Forum and GEF Assembly: Every four years.	Access to Grievance Mechanism: Conflict Resolution	Art of Knowledge Exchange for CSOs
Participation in CSP National Dialogues		Replenishment Process: 2 CSO reps from CSO Network		Upcoming virtual K&L activities

ANNEX II: CONCEPT NOTE ON TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE CONSULTATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN DECEMBER 2020

1. At its 57th meeting in December 2019, the GEF Council selected *The Application of Traditional Knowledge by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, Stewards of the Global Environment* as a topic to be discussed during the GEF Consultations with Civil Society in June 2020, the day preceding the 58th Council meeting. This GEF Council meeting was held virtually due to the COVID19 pandemic and the GEF consultations did not proceed. The GEF Consultations with CSOs will be held in December in association with the 59th GEF Council. In response to the ongoing crisis posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, both the GEF Council (scheduled for December 7-10, 2020) and the GEF Consultations with civil society (scheduled for Friday, December 4, 2020) will be held in virtual form.
2. This consultation is organized by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), the GEF Small Grants Programme and the GEF CSO Network. The consultation aims at bringing the voices of indigenous peoples and local communities in a dialogue with civil society, GEF Council members, GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat and other stakeholders to discuss the value of traditional knowledge in supporting the conservation of biodiversity, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and combating other global and local threats, including responses to the COVID 19 pandemic.
3. GEF has provided considerable support, since its inception, for indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge. The GEF Council recognized the importance of this issue and requested this consultation be undertaken to highlight practical examples from GEF, and other, experience in this area.
4. The consultation will be held in the long shadow of the enormous global effects of the COVID19 which has had devastating significant impact for indigenous peoples. These consultations will highlight how COVID 19 has been affecting indigenous peoples and how the application of traditional knowledge can address and provide solutions to the COVID challenge as a key element of a green recovery plan.
5. The **objectives of the Consultations**⁵ are to:
 - highlight the role of traditional knowledge in assisting indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) to achieve sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and combating land degradation and climate change;

⁵ The consultation will aim to identify at least one concrete recommendation for each of these objectives, targeted at action by the GEF. It is also anticipated that a 2-page briefing will be prepared arising from this consultation to support GEF agencies in implementing GEF funded projects supporting indigenous peoples and to ensure the more effective application of traditional knowledge.

- showcase examples of the application of traditional knowledge from GEF projects around the world, including the [GEF's Inclusive Conservation Initiative](#) and draw lessons to inform implementation of the program;
- provide for inputs from GEF Council Members, partners and key stakeholders, to identify practical actions to better support the application of traditional knowledge within GEF; and
- Highlight the challenges and risks of COVID 19 for indigenous peoples and outline how traditional knowledge can assist indigenous peoples in responding to the COVID19 crisis;

Context: The role of traditional knowledge in responding to global environmental challenges

6. Approximately 25% of the Earth's surface and ocean areas are managed by indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), but it is estimated that these areas hold 80% of the Earth's biodiversity. Most of the world's forests are found on communal lands and in many places community forestry and management has been shown to be more effective than national parks in reducing deforestation. Approximately 40% of lands listed by governments as under conservation is managed by IPLCs, which means they are critical to reaching the Aichi Target on the effective management of protected areas and associated Sustainable Development Goals.
7. Biodiversity is under threat as never before and the [IUCN Red List](#) notes more than 32,000 species are threatened with extinction, representing 27% of all assessed species. The GEF has long recognized the critically important role of IPLCs in protecting the planet's biodiversity and in ensuring sustainable development. Since the founding of the GEF, approximately 10% of GEF medium and full-size projects have had substantive involvement of indigenous peoples. In addition, approximately 30% of the grants provided by the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) in relevant countries has gone to IPLC organizations. Projects involving the traditional knowledge of IPLCs make an important contribution to protecting the global environment.
8. There are many challenges facing the global environment. These include threats associated with climate change and global warming, habitat conversion and urbanization, invasive alien species, and over-exploitation of natural resources. Increasing portfolio of GEF beyond biodiversity, including climate change mitigation (e.g. renewable energy access), chemical and waste management (e.g. artisanal and small scale gold mining, etc.) have engaged indigenous peoples as populations that are most impacted from these threats as well as possible solution providers based on their traditional knowledge.
9. Traditional knowledge can and does play an important role in responding to these challenges. Traditional knowledge is a way of life resulting from Indigenous people's interrelationship with their territories and resources and it's a product of thousands of years of innovation adapted to the environment. It is an important element of the world's

cultural diversity and the foundation for locally appropriate sustainable development. Traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use underpin the resilience of indigenous peoples and local communities to change, including climate threats, contributing directly to biological and cultural diversity, preventing land degradation, managing marine and water resources and reducing the use of harmful chemicals.

10. The COVID 19 pandemic is devastating people and economies around the world. The spread of the virus to humans is the direct consequence of economic growth and degradation of ecosystems, deforestation and land degradation. This has allowed people to be closer to wildlife, often in crowded markets that provide a breeding ground ideal for spreading serious diseases for which humans have no prior immunity—a phenomenon called zoonosis.
11. Indigenous peoples experience a high degree of socio-economic marginalization and are at disproportionate risk in public health emergencies, becoming even more vulnerable during this global pandemic, owing to factors such as their lack of access to effective monitoring and early-warning systems, and adequate health and social services.
12. At the same time, Indigenous peoples' traditional lifestyles and traditional knowledge are a source of their resiliency and can also contribute at this time in preventing the spread of the virus and contributing to lasting solutions to COVID-19 and other such diseases. These solutions should stem from a transformational change to the human systems so that a balance between natural systems and human systems be restored within planetary boundaries⁶.
13. This consultation will thus focus on the challenges and opportunities of traditional knowledge in addressing the urgent threats relating to the loss of biodiversity and in supporting the livelihoods of IPLCs. The consultation will provide an opportunity for CSOs to assess experience with IPLC led approaches and models that effectively address these challenges and to draw out lessons for future application.

⁶GEF's Response to COVID19 (GEF/C.58/Inf.07). https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF_C.58_Inf.07_GEF%27s%20Response%20to%20COVID-19.pdf